

Water

Utah needs to protect underground resource

■ Last in a series

By Joseph Bauman

Deseret News environmental specialist

Utah's health experts are concerned about groundwater contamination, and they are looking for solutions.

Dale D. Parker, director of the Utah Bureau of Solid and Hazardous Waste, said Utah happens to have more water than usual this year. But Utah is a desert state, and eventually it will need all the water it has.

"Ground water is a natural resource and we certainly want to protect it," he said. "Even though it's not pristine and quite often can't be classified as potable water, we feel there's still no reason to degrade it beyond what it already is."

The State Health Department recently applied for a \$120,000 Environmental Protection Agency grant to prepare a groundwater strategy.

"We undoubtedly will be putting resources into it above and beyond the federal money," said Calvin K. Sudweeks, director, Utah Bureau of Water Pollution Control.

Sudweeks once hoped that the 18-month program would start on July 1. But later, Jay Pitkin, assistant director of the Bureau of Water Pollution Control, said, "We haven't been able to iron it out with EPA yet, so we're delayed to September now, if we're able to do it."

Negotiations are continuing with the federal agency, he said.

The program would evaluate all existing data and decide what to do about groundwater pollution. No money was requested for additional water-quality monitoring.

"I think it would have to involve all of the agencies that have authority or interest in groundwater issues," Pitkin said.

Experts would define water quality problems, decide what should be done about them, identify institutional and political impediments to a solution and work out a long-range plan for dealing with the situation.

Regardless of whether the EPA gives the money, the state government is already working to protect groundwater quality.

See GROUND WATER on B-2

S. Jordan basements are displaying excess

By Steve Fidel

Deseret News staff writer

SOUTH JORDAN — Rising ground water has four homeowners bailing, digging trenches and worrying about just where it is coming from.

Gene Candalot, 3807 W. 118th South, said he and three neighbors started getting water in their basements on July 30. "Suddenly we have wells that are flowing for the first time in seven years, at a time when the water tables should be going down."

After fighting the problem for several weeks, owners of the four isolated homes met with city, county and private industry officials. The officials have been unable to confirm where the excess water is coming from, or what can be done about the problem. The joking suggestion that the residents open a water slide was not taken well by the homeowners.

Khyva Bowles, 3846 W. 118th South, said the meeting left her feeling like she is still on her own to solve the problem.

Candalot said, "All the different government agencies seemed to indicate that their hands are tied."

The Candalots' basement is zigzagged with drainage channels that have been chiseled in the concrete. Several pumps extract a steady flow of water from under the house. The only help has come from a private contractor whose services have cost the Candalots several thousand dollars so far.

Mrs. Bowles said she has been bailing water daily from their basement. Her wheat storage is sprouting because of the moisture and her family is using the bathroom in their camper because the septic tanks are flooded. Even her disaster insurance is not helping with the problem.

The residents are blaming Kennecott for the excess water, because the flooding began less than 30 days after Kennecott started filling clay-lined retention ponds about a mile from the houses.

Bob Malone, environmental director for Kennecott, said the ponds were constructed to catch excess spring runoff.

Kennecott's existing facilities are able to handle 5,000 acre-feet of water, Malone said. "What actually came down was 5,000 acre-feet in excess. That's 1.75 billion gal-

See BASEMENTS on B-2

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Basements flooded

Continued from B-1

lons of water."

The water that runs through the mine has to be treated to remove mineral contaminants. Malone said tests conducted by Kennecott show no connection between their water and the water bothering the residents down the hill.

The homeowners have arranged to have a hydrologist run an independent test. The results of these tests should

be completed this week.

Terry Way, with Salt Lake County flood control, said Kennecott is involved in a five-year study to see if any of the water it treats and stores is causing a problem.

Way said it is important to find out what kind of water gets into aquifers. If any water gets into the ground water supply without being properly treated, it can cause problems. "Once the aquifer gets contaminated, it takes a long, long time to clean out."

Ground water

Continued from B-1

Gayle Smith, director of the Utah Bureau of Public Water Supplies, said, "We've expended a lot of effort coordinating between the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Health and the others that were interested."

Utah is fortunate in that, so far, its drinking water has not been contaminated by chemicals, he said.

"We had a Ground Water Protection Act long before the EPA got into the act," he said. The state has not allowed indiscriminate dumping or discharges into ground water.

"But we're now coming to the area where a lot of the mine tailings and a lot of the hazardous wastes have become an issue.

"We've recognized for a lot of years the need to try to protect the quality of ground water," Smith said. "The (State) Water Pollution Control Com-

mittee has just said flatly, 'We are not going to allow the injection of waste into our underground aquifers.'"